

# What is Nitrate?

Nitrate is a chemical found in water that's hard to notice, it has no color, taste or smell. High levels can increase health risks. It's of greatest concern to infants under 6 months, and pregnant women.

Boiling water won't remove nitrate  
IT MAKES IT WORSE!

The only way to know if your well water is safe is to TEST it!

## Where Does Nitrate Come From? Nitrate gets into water from:

✓ Farms - Fertilizers  
Animal Waste

✓ Septic Systems  
Household Wastewater

✓ Industry & Cities  
Food & Wine Manufacturing  
Water Treatment Facilities

Nitrate from these sources can leak into groundwater, which many people use for drinking water.

### Apply for a free well test!

Online at [valleywaterc.org](http://valleywaterc.org)  
or call 209.750.3867

## **What are the risks of drinking water contaminated with nitrate?**

Drinking water with high levels of nitrate can create human health risks, especially for infants and pregnant women.

Infants under six months of age have a greater risk of nitrate poisoning, called methemoglobinemia (“blue baby” syndrome). Toxic effects occur when bacteria in the infant’s stomach convert nitrate to more toxic nitrite. When nitrite enters the bloodstream, it interferes with the body’s ability to carry oxygen to body tissues. Symptoms include shortness of breath and blueness of the skin around the eyes and mouth. Infants with these symptoms need immediate medical care since the condition can lead to coma and eventually death.

High nitrate levels may also affect the oxygen-carrying ability of the blood of pregnant women. Pregnant women are susceptible to methemoglobinemia and should be sure that the nitrate concentrations in their drinking water are at safe levels.

Do not give this water to infants. Infant formula and other edible products should be prepared with bottled water or other water with low levels of nitrate.

You can safely do laundry, bathe, and use the water to clean surfaces if other contaminants are not present.

**Visit the California Department of Public Health Nitrate Fact Sheet for more information.**



Scan for  
Nitrate  
Fact Sheet



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valleywaterc.org